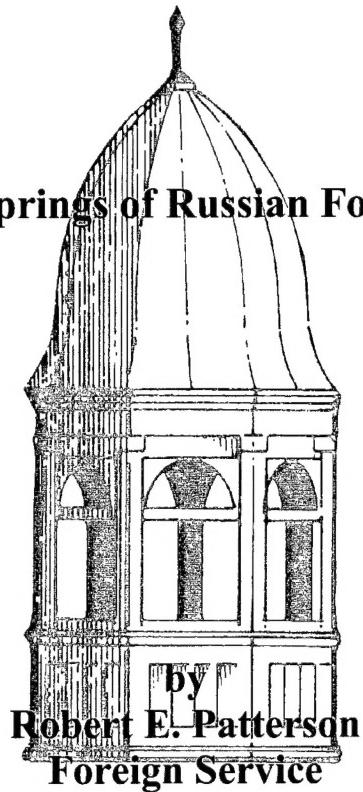


**U.S. Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island**

The Wellsprings of Russian Foreign Policy



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The Wellspings of Russian Policy

by

Robert E. Patterson
Foreign Service

**Advance Research Project
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INTRODUCTION

With the inauguration of President Vladimir Putin, Russia appears to be righting itself after years of instability under General Secretary Gorbachev and President Yeltsin. Backed by continued high popularity ratings, a more docile legislature, and a constitution that vests enormous powers in the executive branch, Putin has begun the task of reconstituting a centralized state after years of drift under his predecessors. He is reining in regions that had won considerable autonomy during the Yeltsin years, in one instance by ruthlessly prosecuting a war against the most independence-minded of those regions, Chechnya, often in the face of withering criticism from the international community.

The Russian President has also begun a measured attack on domestic rivals for power, the oligarchs, and their often criminal confederates in arms. Under Putin, Russia has concentrated on re-building its shattered economy. Although progress has been uneven, and the country remains too dependent on natural resources, growth has resumed on Putin's watch and Russians, with some notable exceptions, would generally agree that they are better off today than they were in the immediate post-Soviet years.

Still, the problems remaining to be addressed are legion. An eviscerated industrial and civil infrastructure ultimately constrain economic growth, while demographic collapse calls into question the very survival of the Russian state. Corruption has seeped into every crevice of the economy and dampened the interest of Western investors. The military is in disarray, with much-needed reforms stymied by competing interests. This list could be extended for pages.

Underlying and to a certain extent framing these and other problems is the question of Russia's place in the world. The implosion of the Soviet Union saw the end, or at least radical truncation, of the Russian Empire. For one of the few times in much of its long history, the principles that conditioned Russia's identity and arguably unified its heterodox Russian polity --expansion into contiguous territory and the subordination of ethnically distinct peoples-- could no longer be the motive forces or the unifying concepts of the post-Soviet Russian state. In the absence of the wherewithal to expand or even maintain empire, Russia has been thrown back on the more traditional sources of national identity: ethnicity, ideology, national grievance, religion, and tradition. Although each of these has figured in the anguished national debate that accompanied the Soviet Union's demise and continues to this day, it is the thesis of this paper that none to date has been able to supplant expansion and empire as the foundations of Russia's new nationhood, just as they were not sufficient during the period of empire. As a result, the Russian imperial impulse endures as a potential source of national identity and consciously and subconsciously conditions many of Russia's foreign policy reflexes, if not necessarily its actions or policies.

Whatever the eventual fate of Russia's imperial impulse, and it is quite possible that with the passage of generations, economic decline, and demographic collapse it will die a natural death, I believe that the United States should factor Russia's reflexive aspirations to empire into its foreign policy calculus. For the near future, this might mean no more than treating Russia with the gravitas it had come to expect as the world's other superpower until 1991. Three considerations condition this recommendation:

-- in spite of its diminished stature, Russia retains the capacity to create significant difficulties for the United States in the foreign policy arena;

-- Russia retains many of the attributes of a global power, and although it will not be known for decades, it is entirely possible that it could re-emerge as a power of the first rank. If it does so, better that its re-emergence be attended by a history of U.S. respect and cooperation than antagonism and neglect.

-- Russia will remain a regional power for the foreseeable future. If its economy continues to expand, it will wield considerable influence in regions of importance to the United States. U.S. disregard could feed Russian regional belligerency.

Before examining these and other matters in more detail, this paper essays a brief review of Russian and Soviet imperial behavior. Why is this important? It is in the creation and extension of the Russian empire, a process that extended over four centuries, that the habits of the present Russian state are to be found. These habits, I contend, shape Russian thinking, if only subliminally, about its place in the world today. Accordingly, this paper attempts to isolate some of the traditional wellsprings of the Russian impulse to expansion and influence. The motive forces identified in the review of the Russian and Soviet periods --the conundrum of Russian national identity, the quest for security in the absence of geographic barriers, the Russian inferiority complex to the West-- are not susceptible to scientific proof but they have been remarked on by generations of Russian and Soviet scholars and by Russians themselves. These motive forces manifest themselves in different ways in different eras --the turn of the screw of history-- but they have to date remained constants, or so this paper maintains. They are important because they are embedded in the Russian national consciousness and frame Russian foreign

policy behavior and Russia's reaction to western foreign policy initiatives. It is often difficult to say exactly how they undergird the Russian foreign policy calculus, but this paper argues that consciously or unconsciously they condition the debate about "whither Russia" and should therefore not be forgotten as U.S. foreign policy is formulated.

A coda: The events of September 11 and the ensuing "war on terrorism" have provoked a much remarked change in Russian - U.S. relations. If the traditional wellsprings of Russian behavior identified in this paper still obtain, however, it is unlikely that the present rapprochement will endure. The identity of interests cited by the Putin administration as it joined forces with the U.S.-led campaign seems so far to suggest that it is an alliance of convenience, which allows Russia to garner support for its bid to join the World Trade Organization, have its moment on the international stage, and intensify its campaign against Chechen "terrorists." In addition to being driven by these transitory considerations, the alliance likely will founder because it cuts against the grain of the above-mentioned enduring wellsprings of Russian behavior, in particular because it is premised on Russian inferiority to the United States.

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Expansion, Identity and the Search for Security

It is difficult to say when Russia became an Empire, or at least began thinking of itself as such. Some scholars date its advent to October 1552, when Russia annexed for the first time a non-Russian sovereign state, the khanate of Kazan.¹ The absorption of that Muslim khanate inaugurated a dynamic that would characterize, and bedevil, Russia as it expanded pell-mell east, south, and west through succeeding centuries: each successive conquest was both prompted by and intended to stanch perceived insecurity caused by the presence of “aliens” on contiguous territory. In the absence of natural geographic barriers --impassable mountain ranges, oceans—and the seemingly limitless expanse of the Eurasian landmass, however, the conquests, in expanding the arc of frontier, only heightened the sense of vulnerability and further increased the perceived fragility of the imperial undertaking.

Russia’s search for security, although expressed territorially, began finally to acquire an unmistakably existential character when, after 1639, Russian explorers leapfrogged the Pacific Ocean and caromed down the coast of what is now California. This inertial expansion across a logical stopping point and into the New World, although eventually reversed, suggested that the Russian push ever outward was driven not by a quest for security but by other factors. The Russian writer Gogol was perhaps describing the impulse two centuries later when, in his novel Dead Souls he likened Russia to a chariot, and famously apostrophized: “Rus’, whither are you speeding?”² That question

¹ Dominic Lieven Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals (New Haven: Yale University Press 2000).

² N.V. Gogol, vol. 4, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moscow, 1973).

remained unanswered when Gogol's attempt to supply a destination for his chariot went up in flames with the ill-fated Part Two of Dead Souls.

From the expansion of Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the reigns of Ivan the Terrible, the Greats (Peter and Catherine), the various Alexanders and Nicholases, and the gray men in gray suits who headed the Soviet Union territorial expansion, often at ruinous cost, has been the leitmotif of the Russian Empire. This impulse to expand has been memorialized by many commentators. Minister of Finance Sergei Witte famously remarked, "since the time of Peter the Great. . .there has been no such thing as Russia. There has been only the Russian Empire."³ The Russian historian Vasiliij Klyuchevskij perhaps best captured empire's irrational malignancy in his phrase "the state swelled up, the people languished."⁴ As one would expect, Stalin's Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, was more dryly categorical. "My task as Minister of Foreign Affairs was to expand the borders of our Fatherland," he wrote.⁵

The Search for National Identity Through Religion

As suggested by Klyuchevskij, continuous outward expansion occurred at great cost to the erstwhile imperialists, the Russians themselves. As Russia absorbed ever-larger swathes of contiguous territory, and the heterodox nationalities that inhabited them, the vexed debate about the nature of Russian national identity began. The discussion initially keyed on religion, and periodically returned to it as Russians wrestled with the question of which they were and where they fit in the heavenly and terrestrial

³ S.Yu. Vitte, Vospominaniya, vol. 3, (Moscow, 1960), pp. 274-275.

⁴ V.O. Klyuchevskij, Sochineniya, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1957), p. 178.

⁵ As quoted in Lieven, p. 295.

cosmologies. Initially at least, it seemed that religious identity subsumed national identity.

Durkheim has described religion as “the system of symbols by means of which a society becomes conscious of itself.”⁶ Traditionally, the Russian peasant had identified himself first with his faith, Russian orthodoxy. Nicolai N. Petro notes: “a Russian peasant would speak of himself as ‘pravoslavnyj’ (Orthodox). Russian was his language, Orthodoxy was his identity.”⁷ The distinction persists in the grammar of Russian to this day, with the appellation “Russian” (“russkij”) rendered as an adjective, or a descriptive qualifier of a noun, while all other nationalities in the Russian language are rendered as nouns. The grammar implicitly suggest that “Russianness” is not intrinsic or essential, but appended, and that it is no greater in semantic weight or potential permanence than any other adjective that could be applied to an inhabitant of the Russian landmass, like “sad” or “drunk.” One’s religious affiliation, on the contrary, went to the core of one’s identity.

But membership in the community of Orthodox Christians was not the prerogative of Russians alone. Russia had absorbed the Orthodox version of Christianity relatively late from Byzantium. Various ideologists of the Russian state had attempted to derive Russian nationality from Orthodoxy by positing Russia as the inheritor of a “truer” religious tradition. This was expressed variously as “Moscow as the third Rome,” in sundry schisms, and in an historical revisionism, especially by members of the

⁶ Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, (London: Allan & Unwin, 1964), p. 36.

⁷ Nicolai N. Petro, The Rebirth of Russian Democracy, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 61.

“Landmarks” (Vekhi) movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸ They believed that the church had been eclipsed in Petrine Russia, and they proposed that it re-acquire the primacy it enjoyed in Muscovy; that the tension between “basileus and khan” be resolved in favor of the former. (Some nineteenth century theorists of Empire begged to differ. The literary critic Vissarion Belinskij believed that “Russia before Peter was only a people. She became a nation thanks to the impulse supplied by him.”⁹) There were also persistent attempts to posit a uniquely “Russian” Orthodox theology as a way of providing a foundation for national identity. Distinctive to the Russian Orthodox tradition, some Russian theologians held, were notions like sobornost', the “organic equilibrium of personality and society,” that found its purest expression in institutions like the village mir, a kind of New England town meeting where all were listened to, regardless of social status.¹⁰ (The Russians' alleged reflexive impulse to collectivity would loom large in debates on the eve of the Socialist Revolution.)

The attempt to derive a distinctive Russian national consciousness from a sometimes-tendentious interpretation of Orthodoxy, and from that national consciousness to create a nation, ultimately failed. Some attribute the failure to the priority given to the building of the empire. Peter the Great's successful subordination of church to state as he pursued empire separated the Russian's religious identity from his citizenship and made it impossible that Orthodoxy could ever be the nucleus of Russian national identity.

⁸ For more on Vekhi, see Vekhi: sbornik statej o russkoj intelligentsii (Moskva, 1909).

⁹ V.G. Belinskij, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol. 5, (Moskva, 1924), p. 124.

The Artificial Citizen

The historian of Russia Geoffrey Hosking defines a nation as a “large, territorially extended and socially differentiated aggregate of people who share a sense of common fate or of belonging together.”¹¹ In his revisionist history of the British Empire, David Cannadine terms nations “imagined communities.”¹² In Cannadine’s telling, the British imperial imagination was equal to the task of fashioning a nation from much of its Empire. Hosking suggests that Russians on the contrary were not. “Empire was too large, unwieldy, too diverse to generate an equivalent sense of community,” he writes. Hosking traces the rupture of the organic evolution of Russian nationhood to the imperial impulse, an impulse that put Rus' (the homeland of the Eastern Slavs), a word connected with the people, the language and the pre-imperial principalities, and Rossiya a sixteenth century Latin import suggesting noblesse oblige, on divergent tracks. With the schism, two separate castes were created in Russia: one to emblemize the strivings of empire and Rossiya; a second, “the people (Rus'),” to bear its burdens.¹³

The Russian nobility was created and maintained in “expensive non-productivity” to represent Russia’s imperial and national strivings to the outside world, in particular, to Europe. The nobles’ landed estates were “islands of European culture in what they themselves regarded as oceans of barbarism.” The language of social intercourse was French and extended sojourns in Europe were de rigueur. As Hosking notes: “The Russian fascination with Western European culture is comparable to the way in which

¹⁰ Petro, p. 76.

¹¹ Geoffrey A. Hosking, Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. xx.

¹² David Cannadine, Orientalism (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3.

¹³ Hosking, pp. xxi.

nineteenth-century colonial elites, having been educated in the mother country would on return home yearn for the sophisticated life they had known in their youth.”¹⁴ These citoyens, then, were self-conscious artifacts; the cultural construction of Russian citizenship had foreign underpinnings.

In fact, in many instances it was not just the underpinnings that were foreign. Members of the Baltic German nobility occupied a disproportionate number of senior official posts in the nineteenth-century Russian government. There were particularly egregious examples. Count K.V. Nessel’rode, of German origin and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia for over thirty years, spoke almost no Russian. General Yermolov, a Russian and a hero of the conquest of the Caucasus, when asked by the tsar what reward he desired for his service to the Empire, replied, “to be promoted to the rank of German.”¹⁵

Yermolov’s wish to be promoted from servant to citoyen was no doubt shared by many subjects of the Russian Empire. But such was not their lot, especially the numberless Russian serfs who often were treated more poorly than their conquered counterparts. If in fact Toynbee is right that “ease is inimical to civilization,”¹⁶ then it was the uneducated Russian peasant who, paradoxically, accomplished Russia’s “civilizing” mission in its contiguous territories. In addition, Russians bore all the burdens of serfdom from which the conquered peoples were exempted. All peoples, Russians included, were the raw material of empire, to be manipulated or dominated as seemed expedient.

¹⁴ Hosking, p. 159.

¹⁵ Walter Laqueur, Russia and Germany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), p. 16.

¹⁶ As quoted in Lieven, p. 201.

A similar gulf between citizen and servant of Empire did not exist for the citizens of other empires. As Otto van Hapsburg has asserted, the members of the Austro-Hungarian Empire “felt (they were) citizens of the whole.”¹⁷ In Russia, the chasm between the two castes became increasingly difficult to ignore, and increasingly desperate attempts were made to elide the difference.

Russia and the West

Many such efforts were prompted by Russia’s problematic relationship to Europe. Dominic Lieven (himself the descendant of Baltic Germans who played a key role in Russian history) nicely sums up the Russian dilemma: ‘Russia’s relationship with Europe is unique. . .Partly because their indigenous culture was closer to Latin Christianity and was in any case not as deeply rooted in Confucianism or Islam, the Russians proved uniquely successful in adopting with institutions and values. . .But precisely because it was more accessible to European influences and subjected to them for much longer, Russian identity was never as secure or as confident as the older and more alien Confucian, Buddhist, or Islamic societies.’¹⁸ Europe’s notion of unitary citizenship was an implicit reproach to a Russia uncertain of its identity, and it prompted strenuous and ultimately unsuccessful efforts by the Russian empire to approximate European civil society.

The responses to the challenge of Russian identity posed by Europe ranged from a celebration of Russia’s “semi-Asiatic” roots to an espousal of the more moderate Slavophile and Westernizing strains. All responses, however, betrayed a Russian

¹⁷ G.R. Urban, End of Empire (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1993), pp. 139-140.

¹⁸ Lieven, p. 229.

inferiority complex. Eurasianism, the wholehearted embrace of Russia's alleged semi-Asiatic nature, was a "spin-off of Russia's difficult relation with Europe, its sense of inferiority and rejection."¹⁹ The more radical strains of Slavophile thought attacked the West for its materialism, individualism, and secularism. Ivan Kireyevskij and other, more moderate Slavophiles, like the members of the "Landmarks" movement who followed in the twentieth century, waxed nostalgic for a pre-Petrine social contract and insisted on Russia's distinctiveness.²⁰ The Russian Westernizers viewed Europe as a template; Russia could do no better than to cut itself from the same cloth. Their resentment was that harbored by any epigone; caused by the unbridgeable chasm that separated Russia and the "civilized" West.

Other Russian analysts attempted to put the best face on Russia's quasi-European, quasi-Asiatic status. The radical nineteenth-century political thinker Aleksandr Herzen, alternately exiled by himself or the tsar throughout much of his life, took the two-headed imperial eagle as his reigning simile. Like Russia, the eagle heads look east and west, but its heart beat as one, he perhaps too optimistically asserted.²¹ Still others were too nihilistic. In his famous 1836 letter to the journal Teleskop, the intellectual and writer Pyotr Chaadayev parried Herzen. Russia was poised between Asia and Europe, he wrote, and has borrowed nothing fruitful from either.²²

But it took a military debacle to prompt the Russian intelligentsia to cast its net wider in the search for a national identity, over all of the Slavs. Panslavism was at least

¹⁹ Lieven, p. 220.

²⁰ E.J. Simmons (ed.), Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

²¹ Aleksandr Gertsen, Byloe Idumy, vol. 1, (Moscow, 1963), p. 366

²² Raymond T. McNally (ed.), The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 28.

in part a response to Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, and the Serb and Bulgarian revolts against the Ottoman Empire that followed. It asserted that all of the Slavs shared a common fate, and it crystallized a grudge that some hoped would coalesce into an identity; against the West's alleged ingratitude to Slavdom for its role in stemming the Moslem tide. Although Alexander the Second's regime eventually allowed Russians to aid the efforts of their fraternal Slavs, the effort foundered on the cultural differences that separated the Slav nationalities, diminishing the enthusiasm for the pan-Slavic idea.

The seemingly insuperable gaps between ruler and ruled mimicked the gap between empire and nation, between Rus' and Rossiya. When members of the nobility like Herzen, Pushkin, or the Decembrists²³ tried to bridge that gap, they collided with the imperial state, "which still fundamentally required Asiatic satraps."²⁴ The choice for the nobility was either to assent to the largely symbolic role of citizen or internal or external exile.

Search for a Bridge between Empire and Nation

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a fledgling Russian intelligentsia began its search for a way to bridge that gap. It initially settled on the Cossacks as an appropriate symbol of the nation-building impulse. In some respects the Cossacks were like the louche English noblemen who often dragged a reluctant Great Britain into empire. But the English adventurers were certain of their allegiance. They were regulars in the British military, they reported the results of their military escapades directly to Queen Victoria, they frequented the officers clubs in London when on leave from their

²³ The Decembrists were two groups of military officers who staged a short-lived rebellion in 1825.

²⁴ Hosking, p. 479.

service abroad, and they coveted the medals and promotions that accompanied and stimulated the building of an Empire.

The Cossacks could not have been more different. Bandits, who resided on the fringes of the Russian Empire, they lived outside the smothering apparatus of the state. They were military irregulars, the officer clubs of Moscow or St. Petersburg were more foreign to them than the territory they conquered, and they preferred war booty to the St. George's Cross. The Russian government enlisted them on contract to accomplish the task of empire building and it was rightly uncertain of their ultimate loyalty. With time, the "self-willed" ("vol'nie") Cossacks were seen to embody for Russians some features of the frontier spirit associated with the pioneers in the United States. Russian writers -- Tolstoy, Gogol'—and artists like Repin, lionized them in their works. But the Cossacks were the quintessential outsiders, until forcibly subordinated by the government, while the American pioneers incarnated the essential nation-building impulse. Their outsider status made it impossible for the Cossacks to epitomize Russian national aspirations.

With the failure of the Cossacks to serve as a locus for national aspirations the Russian writer was enlisted in the task of making a nation of the Russian Empire. In the eighteenth century, the writer had been tasked to create for Russia the odes and epics thought necessary to any self-respecting nation-state. Court poets like Vasilij Trediakovskiy and Gavril Derzhavin had dutifully complied. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, each new work of literature was tested for its ability to anatomize Russia's existential dilemmas. Members of a self-appointed intelligentsia tendentiously "explained" the works to an eager audience and too often deemed writers who, in their

view had succeeded, “prophets” or “seers” of Russian nationhood. Many of the writers crumbled under this unexpected and unwanted burden.

In the hands of these critics, Pushkin’s narrative poem, Evgenij Onegin, became “an encyclopedia of Russian life,” his The Bronze Horseman spawned the figure of the “little man” shaking his fist at the Russian state in the form of Falconet’s statue of Peter the Great. Other archetypes were also discovered, in particular, that of the “superfluous man,” who came to emblemize the dilemma of the nobility and Russia’s newly-spawned intelligentsia: the lack of a role for the would-be citizen in Russia’s inchoate state.

Still, even at the prodding of the critics, the writers were ill suited for their prophetic roles, and the “types” they were thought to have identified, while perhaps useful in anatomizing some of the key dilemmas of empire, Russian-style, were not able to resolve them. The tension between ruled and ruler, between Rus' and Rossiya, sharpened under Nicholas the Second. Belated efforts to mitigate it, by acceding more power to the Constituent Assembly for example, failed. The Communist Party succeeded the Romanov dynasty and the Soviet Union replaced the Russian Empire, but the empire remained and the dilemmas of nation building persisted.

Summary

The contention of the first part of this paper, and of many Russians and historians of Russia, is that the establishment of the Russian Empire occurred at the expense of the creation of a nation. The projection of power ever outward became the *raison d'etre* of the Russian state and everything was subordinated to that task. The institutions of citizenship were created artificially, in imitation of Western Europe and as a result of feelings of inferiority. Russians were the victims of the rapid expansion of Empire. They

were either ensnared by an empire acting in their name or consigned to the role of citizen in a state that had no place for an active citizenry. How did these phenomena influence Russia's behavior in the international arena? Feelings of inferiority and the habit of expansion created an unstable mix. The absence of the ballast that could be provided by an active citizenry further fueled that instability and played a role in the events of 1917.

THE SOVIET EMPIRE

Russian-Soviet Continuity

In adopting the ideology of communism, Russia superficially ended its vexed relationship with Europe, or at least replaced the feelings of inferiority, which had plagued it for more than a century with those of direct rivalry. By becoming the first state to embrace the ideology of Marxism, Russia went from being Europe's poor stepchild to its avatar of progress. Although the leader of a revolutionary vanguard Russia was also, paradoxically, inheritor of the same Enlightenment tradition that undergirded the building of the British Empire.²⁵ Yet in absorbing, through Marx, the Enlightenment belief in progress and rationality, Russia became, in a further paradox, the greatest threat to Western Europe since the Ottoman Empire.

Continuity theorists argue that the upheavals of the Revolution: the violent end of the Romanov reign, and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' paradise, tended to obscure what the Russian and Soviet empires had in common. Alexander the First's Minister of Education, Count Sergei Uvarov's "samoderzhavie, pravoslavie, and narodnost'" ("autocracy", "orthodoxy," and "nationality") encapsulated perhaps the most distinctive contribution of the old regime to the Soviet state, but other traditions were inherited as well.²⁶ In its effort to survive World War II, the Soviet regime absorbed much of the military-patriotic tradition of tsarist Russia. (This included the tradition of devoting much of the gross national product to the military, although it must be remembered that in the eighteenth century military needs consumed a whopping 60-70

²⁵ Lieven, p. 321.

²⁶ H. Seton-Watson, The Russian Empire, 1801-1917 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 83.

percent of the Russian imperial government's entire state budget.)²⁷ Peter the Great was rehabilitated, Russian patriotism was dusted off, and even the Russian Orthodox Church was enlisted, albeit sparingly, in the effort to save Stalin and the Soviet state.

Subliminally contributing to the confusion over the relationship between the Russian Empire and the Soviet state as well was a people accustomed to patrimonial institutions whatever the regime. With the advent of the Soviet Union, the guiding force of the Communist Party replaced the monarchical principle.

The scholar Adam Ulam describes Soviet patriotism as "an ideological veneer over good, old-fashioned Russian nationalism."²⁸ Elsewhere Ulam elaborates: "there is a Russian element in the Soviet form of communism. It stems from a particularly authoritarian conception of socialism in the nineteenth century to which were added a very Russian form of xenophobia and Russian nationalism."²⁹ Richard Pipes and other scholars of the Soviet Union also have frequently argued that the Soviet system is the product of Russian history and political culture.

Ulam's and Pipes' comments were anticipated by "Landmarks'" member and theologian Nikolai Berdyaev, who noted some sixty years earlier: "In 1917 we believed that communism had swallowed up Russia; today we see that Russia has swallowed up communism."³⁰

²⁷ Walter Pintner, "The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia," Russian Review, vol. 43 (1984), pp. 246-247.

²⁸ Seweryn Bialer, The Democratic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), p. 14.

²⁹ Urban, p. 176.

³⁰ Petro, p. 55.

An Artificial Citizen: The Soviet Man

Yet other observers of Russia, however, refuse to see Soviet reality as simply lacquered Russian patriotism. Unlike the Russian Empire, the Soviet state made a concerted effort to integrate its diverse nationalities into its Empire, not simply to subordinate them in pushing its frontiers outward. While not going so far as to describe this effort as a “mutually beneficial encounter,” they point approvingly to such Soviet policies as korenizatsiya, the practice of creating a governing class from indigenous nationalities.³¹ They also note that literacy rates in traditionally undereducated regions like Central Asia were by the 1950s far higher than in the Muslim states of the Middle East. As a result of korenizatsiya and strenuous efforts to educate the masses, indigenous cadres occupied responsible positions in the Soviet republics to a degree that their counterparts in other colonies could only envy.³²

The Soviet regime’s efforts to absorb its diverse nationalities into its leadership structures was of course a natural outgrowth of its ideology. The policy, however, also held a funhouse mirror to the Russian imperial regime’s efforts to inveigle representatives of the Baltic nobility into positions of responsibility. In both instances, the motivating factors were class affiliation and ideology. And in both cases, the policy was executed at the apparent expense of the nominally imperial people, the Russians. The Russian tsars were attempting to inject Prussian discipline and the “West” into the state’s table of ranks

³¹ Cannadine, p. 171.

³² Richard A. Pierce, Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 226.

a la Goncharov's Oblomov, and the Soviet state was demonstrating its proletarian internationalism by recruiting from the bottom rung of the class ladder.³³

But the Soviet state was attempting something else as well. Its affirmative action program addressed the vexed problem of Russian national identity by making it seemingly irrelevant. Russians and the other Soviet nationalities were to be succeeded by a qualitatively different creature, the "new Soviet man," the deracinated product of an ideological construct. In addition to ideology, the demographics of the Soviet empire mandated it. As Samuel Huntington and others before him have noted, Russia sits athwart a civilizational fault line.³⁴ There are twenty million Moslems in Russia alone and complete integration of the workers' paradise would require that ethnicity take a back seat.

With the aid of purges, deportations, the imaginative re-drawing of internal boundaries, "Russification," the suppression of religion and the other talismans of identity, and a steady ideological drumbeat the Soviet Union made much superficial progress in its effort to fashion an undifferentiated mass from its tapestry of nationalities. As a Financial Times correspondent wrote: "The Soviet Union claims to have created a new man, and unfortunately it has succeeded."³⁵ At the same time it, paradoxically, reified that diversity by using ethnicity as an organizing principle in creating the republics and autonomous districts that comprised the Soviet Union. The elephant in the room as this construct was created was the Russians. Although the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was by far the largest of the USSR's fifteen

³³ Ilya Goncharov's mid-19th century novel Oblomov features a feckless Russian and a German who epitomizes all of the stereotypical German virtues.

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

republics, the Russians had no republic-level communist party of their own and many other republic-level political institutions that existed in the other fourteen republics were absent in the RSFSR as well. With the advent of perestroika, the USSR's other nationalities were free to argue that the virtual absence of a Russian national support infrastructure was implicit proof of Russian hegemony. Russian was of course the lingua franca of the empire and Moscow its capital, but that was only "natural."

Still, the strenuous attempts of the Soviet leadership to efface ethnicity and construct an "indestructible union," as the Soviet anthem had it, did not succeed in creating a nation if, as the philosopher-historian Ernest Renan writes, a nation is a "daily plebiscite, a tacit day-to-day agreement to live together in a community."³⁶ The agreement to live together in this community was not voluntary. As soon as the pressure eased, under Gorbachev's perestroika, the union began to unravel. In addition to the well-known expressions of centrifugal sentiment in the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasus, Russians resumed their search for a national identity. Prominent writers Vasiliy Belov and Yuriy Bondarev in their so-called "village prose" attempted to re-cast the now-mythic folkways of pre-revolutionary and of pre-Petrine Rus' in a Soviet setting. It is not surprising that writers rifled Russia's past for clues to their long-suppressed national identity after the traumatic 74-year Soviet experiment. It was perhaps unexpected that many of these same writers, as the Communist Party and the Soviet way of life increasingly came under fire during perestroika, concluded that the Soviet regime ultimately expressed the culture and values of the Russian empire, and of Russians. Their shrill defense of the Soviet state, through such national-patriotic organizations as

³⁵ David Satter, The Financial Times (June 26, 1982), p. 6.

³⁶ As quoted in Hosking, p. 485.

Pamyat', found an audience among those Russians most disconcerted by the changes underway. In the confused politics of Pamyat' and like organizations Soviet and Russian reality were conflated. The tsarist intelligentsia's chip on its shoulder about the West became dogma in the hands of the new Russian patriots.

Expansion, Identity, and the Search for Security

As with the Russian Empire, the principle of contiguous imperial expansion persisted during the Soviet period. In imitation of its western rivals, the Soviet Union largely favored "soft colonization" this time around. It fostered a network of alliances, economic unions, satellites, and client states. It did not shy from military intervention when the underpinnings of its empire were threatened, but it attempted to preserve the appearance of voluntary association.

Contiguous expansion, in the name of an ideology this time, changed the dynamic between conquered and conqueror. It also further complicated the Russian search for a stable national identity. The Russians were already subsumed in a multi-ethnic socialist union in which the strivings for self-realization of the "other" Soviet peoples were abetted and in which class affiliation took precedence over ethnicity. Now, as members of a revolutionary vanguard, "fraternal" relations were expected to replace imperial relations, class affiliation was to replace national identification. Questions of Russian national identity seemed even more submerged, yet "Russian" became shorthand for the Soviet state and some of the worst features of Soviet rule were ascribed to Russian national character. The equivocal nature of "Russianess" often led Russians to identify themselves as Soviets and victims of the totalitarian state at the same time it caused others, the Jews in particular, to see "Russian" as protective coloration on the famous

"fifth point" (nationality) of their Soviet passports. As during the period of the Russian Empire, the subordination of nationality to the requirements of the Soviet empire prolonged questions of national self-identification for Russians.

The Soviet Union and the West

Just as indirect, soft colonization replaced imperial expansion during the Soviet period, competition with the world's other powers increasingly shifted from the military to the economic sphere. Military power, however, remained the fist in the velvet glove of economic competition. East and West spent enormous sums of money on it, and much time and attention was given to crafting arms control agreements that would preserve a balance of terror. That said, as the era of "stagnation" wound down, then-General Secretary Brezhnev and the rest of the Soviet leadership were clearly aware that military might was a necessary but not sufficient attribute of a superpower. As Brezhnev noted already in 1981: "the decisive sector of competition with capitalism is the economy and economic policy."³⁷

The shift of the arena of competition from the military to the economic catalyzed the re-emergence of Russia's latent inferiority complex toward the West. Decades of autarky and measurable economic progress under Stalin had created the impression among its own citizens that the Soviet Union was the economic colossus its propaganda claimed it to be. With the opening of the door to the West during Khrushchev's "thaw," then serious economic stagnation under Brezhnev, those illusions were shattered. Détente under Brezhnev was an attempt to stabilize relations with the United States in order to concentrate on shoring up the foundations of national strength.

³⁷ As quoted in Lieven, p. 298.

Many historians of the Russian and Soviet states describe three great cycles of modernization from above designed to allow Russia to compete with the great power of the West. All had catastrophic results for the Russian people. The last, under Gorbachev, ended in the loss of much of the Russian Empire.

Gorbachev's perestroika was, like War Communism under Lenin, an attempt to salvage the Soviet state by making socialism seem more responsive to Soviet national interests. Like Brezhnev's détente, it premised a comparative political rapprochement with the West in order to allow domestic political and economic renewal to occur without the complicating pressure of a sharp superpower rivalry. It failed, largely because the Soviet Empire, like its predecessor the Russian Empire, had bungled the task of nation building. In its headlong pursuit of empire, the Soviet state had ignored the critical question of nationality, it had confused the distinction between contiguity and unity, it had conflated military with economic prowess, and its governing apparatus was insufficiently flexible to accommodate change. As R. Craig Morton summarizes, the Soviet regime was "eroded by the process of modernization itself, by the globalization of world markets which made the highly autarkic Soviet model hopelessly outdated. . .by the homogenization of aspirations born of a universalized image of the good life."³⁸

Hugh Trevor-Roper has remarked that "imperial power is a great stabilizer. . .it takes the sting out of nationalism by removing the element of insecurity." Trevor-Roper wished, on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, to see "lip service" paid to communism, because it would be the "mere repetition of an empty ritual, far safer for the

³⁸ R. Craig Morton and Michael McFaul, The U.S. and Russia into the Twentieth Century (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1997), pp. 5-6.

rest of the world than an exacerbated Russian nationalism.”³⁹ In fact, it was not Russian nationalism, but other nationalisms --Armenian, Serbian, Chechen—that threatened stability as the Soviet empire unraveled. The failure of a violent Russian revanchism to surface as an empire and a way of life ended again suggests that Russia’s imperial greatness had been achieved, in its Soviet guise as well, at the cost of a stunted Russian nationhood.

Summary

The Soviet period continued and further complicated the conundrum of Russian identity by attempting to supplant it with an artificial construct, the Soviet man. The requirements of Soviet ideology, with its emphasis on class and economic system as the wellsprings of identity, submerged and deferred Russia's attempts at self-definition. The initial confidence provided by the Revolution eroded as the Soviet economy failed to keep pace with those of its western counterparts and as military parity with the United States became increasingly difficult to sustain. The foreign policy of the early Soviet period was largely devoted to an expansion of empire. Much of the foreign policy of the late Soviet period (*détente*, perestroika) was designed to maintain the status quo so that the Soviet economy could re-tool. When that failed to happen, many of the same factors present at the Russian imperial regime's collapse: the lack of a citizenry with an interest in the survival of empire, the pervasive belief that the Soviet Union did not "measure up" to its western rivals and therefore was somehow illegitimate, the lure of another economic system -- capitalism-- hastened its demise. Like imperial Russia, the Soviet

³⁹ In Urban, pp. 86, 97.

Union pursued empire at the expense of nation building only to see the nation collapse when the momentum of expansion slowed.

THE YELTSIN ERA: RUSSIA'S SECOND INTERREGNUM

Russia and the West: A Temporary Alliance

The Soviet regime's inability to confront or control the systemic change triggered by perestroika ended in the collapse not just of the USSR but of the bipolar world that had existed since World War II. The cooperative and, occasionally, collusive arrangements that had accompanied the mature phase of the Cold War rivalry were replaced by an initially closer relationship, but the dynamics were radically different. As had been the case during perestroika and the period of détente, Russian foreign policy concentrated on securing a breathing space for domestic reform by minimizing its difficulties abroad. But with the end of the Soviet empire, Russia was no longer the second superpower. The radical shift in foreign policy toward the West which had begun under Gorbachev became even more pronounced during the early Yeltsin years. If then-Foreign Minister Kozyrev had a foreign policy strategy, other than to accept uncritically whatever the West offered, it was not clear. Kozyrev's perceived passivity provoked domestic criticism that he was making policy in an ad hoc manner.⁴⁰ In fact, Kozyrev had outlined the basic principles of the newly-minted Russian Federation's foreign policy concept as early as February 1992, where he had pegged "the development of ties of alliance with the U.S. and other Western countries, with NATO, and with the WEU, as well as the maximum use of multilateral agreements for creating both a global security system and its regional analogues" as one of Russia's key foreign policy principles.⁴¹ This appeared too cozy by half to many Russians, not just the old guard and late-

⁴⁰ John Scott Masker, "Signs of a Democratized Foreign Policy?" World Affairs (Spring 1998), p. 179.

⁴¹ George Ginsburgs, Alvin Z. Rubinstein, and Oles M. Smolansky (eds.), Russian and America: From Rivalry to Reconciliation (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 316-317.

twentieth-century slavophiles. When Kozyrev's strategy failed to produce the avalanche of aid many Russians naively expected, opposition further sharpened.⁴²

The mounting resistance to Kozyrev's uncritical integration with the West was the natural result of Russia's centuries-old ambivalence about its place in the world. This ambivalence was sharpened by the loss of empire, but there were other factors as well. Russia had for too many years worn hats that would make it an uneasy partner in any wholehearted alliance with the West. It had been the bridge between Asia and Europe, the Third Rome, the last bulwark against Islam, first among equals in the Slavic world and, most recently, the vanguard of the international proletariat. The memory of those historical roles ensured that resistance to the Western tilt did not come, as was often claimed at the time, just from the "losers" in Russia's transformation, although there were enough losers to ensure serious resistance in any event. Other politicians almost immediately offered alternative versions of Russian foreign policy. In a not-too-distant echo of the nineteenth-century proponents of Eurasianism, Moscow insider Sergei Stankevich suggested that Russia cultivate ties with Moslem countries.⁴³ Vladimir Zhirinovskij, whose Liberal Democratic Party of Russia would become frighteningly popular as the Russian economy continued to implode and the West encroach, advocated an ad hoc alliance with what the U.S. then called "rogue" regimes.⁴⁴

For its part, the U.S. foreign policy establishment's readiness to uncritically embrace Kozyrev's pro-Western rhetoric stemmed from the naïve belief that Russia would be transformed overnight into a "democratic, loyal, and above all unquestioning

⁴² Michael McFaul, "A Precarious Peace: Domestic Politics in the Making of Russian Foreign Policy," International Security (Winter 1997), pp. 5-31.

⁴³ Ginsburgs et al, p. 317.

⁴⁴ Masker, p. 179.

supporter of Western policy.”⁴⁵ That readiness suggests that the U.S. was unprepared for the collapse of the Soviet Union and that it was, if anything, more affected by years of its own Cold War propaganda than were the Russians. U.S. foreign policy strategists appeared to believe that Soviet citizens had indeed been unwilling subjects of a totalitarian regime, and that once that yoke was removed, Russia would assume its rightful place in the Western world. The practical genius of such an understanding was that it required only modest dollops of foreign aid to accomplish Russia’s transformation. With some instruction in the intricacies of a free-market economy, aid in institutionalizing the rule of law, advice on the establishment of political parties, etc., Russia would be ready to join the community of democracies.⁴⁶ If, as Alvin Rubinstein writes, “even during the worst days of the Cold War, political tensions were compartmentalized because there was no tradition of hostility between the American and Russian peoples,” the result of America aid strategies at the end of the Cold War saw the emergence of Russian popular hostility toward Americans, who for their part thought they were only trying to help their Russian brethren.⁴⁷

Ironically, the up tick in popular hostility occurred after the five broad developments which had sustained the Cold War from the American vantage point had disappeared. The advance of Soviet military power into the heart of Europe had been reversed. The export of communism had ended. Khrushchev’s “forward policy,” the advance of Soviet troops or their proxies into non-contiguous areas, had ended as well. The Soviet Union’s oceanic naval force was but a shell of its former self and concerns

⁴⁵ Morton, p. 7.

⁴⁶ For a scathing review of U.S. aid policy to Russia, see Stephen Cohen, Failed Crusade (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁷ Ginsburgs et al, p. 304.

about Russia's nuclear capability had shifted from countering it to managing its decline.⁴⁸ The disappearance of these traditional flash points should have allowed the U.S. to tend its new relationship with Russia in a more dispassionate manner. Unfortunately, in the eyes of many Russians, with their disappearance Russia's hard-won parity with the West disappeared. Instead of U.S. dispassion, U.S. disregard was the result.

George Kennan was one of the first to discern Russia's decline and to suggest how the Empire's new status should be managed by the United States. In a 1989 editorial in the New York Times, Kennan counseled: "That country should now be regarded essentially as another great power, like other great powers – one, that is, whose aspirations and policies are conditioned outstandingly by its own geographic situation, history, and tradition, and are therefore not identical to our own, but are also not so seriously in conflict with ours as to justify any assumption that the outstanding differences could not be adjusted by the normal means of compromise and accommodation."⁴⁹ Kennan did not, tellingly, suggest that Russia's interests could be made congruent with those of the United States.

National Identity and the Former Empire

The end, or at least contraction, of empire in some ways sharpened the debate about the fate of Russians at the hands of their always-neglectful state. The millions of Russians "stranded" in the "near abroad" with the break-up of the Soviet Union became the vehicle through which those in the Russian Federation could express their pent-up unhappiness at the end of empire and their own historical neglect. The mistreatment,

⁴⁸ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Russia in Strategic Perspective," The Russian Review (Winter 1993), p. 76.

⁴⁹ George F. Kennan, "Just Another Great Power," The New York Times (4/9/89), p. 23.

imagined and real, of their compatriots at the hands of fledgling regimes in places like Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine became a proxy for the treatment historically meted out to them by their own government, especially their own reduced state following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the years of decline that had preceded it. The anger of the average Russian at the indignities suffered by his coevals abroad was all the easier to express because it was abetted by a Russian state anxious to deflect rising domestic popular discontent. Although the intense focus on Russians abroad should have, at last, crystallized the debate about who and what a Russian exactly was, it did not. Instead, the media, government, and the multinational organizations and NGOs charged with monitoring human rights settled for russkoyazychnye ("Russian speakers") as their proximate cause for concern.

In designating russkoyazychnye, those who spoke Russian as their primary and perhaps only language, as their proxies abroad, the Russian state sidestepped the question of nationality, casting its net instead over anyone who spoke the language of empire and was willing to be so identified. That was consistent with Russia's decision, following the break-up of the Soviet Union, to assume the role of the successor state to the USSR, with all of the imperial obligations that implied. As the ultimate protector of all those washed ashore on the shoals of empire, the Russian Federation found itself interceding for, in many instances, the "new Soviet man" that the USSR had striven so hard to create. Whether induced to move by the promise of work, as was the case of Russian peasants who staffed "Little Russia's" coal mines and factories under the tsars, or resettled in one of socialism's grand experiments --the "virgin lands" program in northern Kazakhstan or "russification" in Latvia and Estonia-- the Russian speakers were transformed overnight

from the shock troops of an imperial state to its orphans. The Russian Federation's response to the plight of these orphans underscored what would become an unstated principle of its post-1991 foreign policy. In Estonia, where a restrictive definition of citizenship was established by a liberal political regime, the response was angrier and the multilateral approach outlined by Kozyrev was put to work. In Uzbekistan, where the government was much more repressive and discrimination against Russian-speakers harsher, the Russian Federation's response was mild and emigration to Russia was tacitly encouraged. Celeste Wallander diplomatically ascribes the differently calibrated responses to a "fluid Russian sense of identity."⁵⁰ In fact, it had been a Russian tradition since at least 1639 to halt expansion when it "fetched up against another partner capable of offering effective resistance."⁵¹ And Russia's adoption of its Russian-speaking counterparts abroad could be described as "expansion lite." (Other observers ascribed it to an atavistic impulse or, after the Chechen conflict began in 1994, a cynical attempt by Moscow to deflect attention from its own, much more egregious human rights violations.) Certainly Latvia and Estonia suspected that the Russian government planned to use the Russian-speakers as a fifth column, and they alternately attempted to pass restrictive citizenship laws or encourage the Russian-speakers to "go home," although many were generations removed from Russia, in an effort to reduce the influence of their once powerful neighbor. Whatever its tactical advantages, designating russkoyazychnye as the subjects of empire was remarkably consistent with the historical definition of "Russian" as someone who spoke the Russian language. By making all Russian speakers objects of

⁵⁰ Celeste A. Wallander, The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 134.

⁵¹ Hosking, p. 14.

Russian government concern Moscow blurred the distinction between nation and empire once again.

The CIS and the Remnants of Empire

If the Russian Federation's professed concern about Russian speakers abroad was "expansion lite," then the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) could be described as "empire lite." With the CIS, Moscow attempted to capitalize on presumed nostalgia for seventy years of a shared past among the countries' elites, established economic and infrastructure ties, an implied hostility toward the West, and the members' jointly threadbare economies to maintain influence over its former dominions. The degree of enthusiasm for the undertaking varied with each prospective member's assessment of its own future prospects. With their sights set firmly on European integration the Baltic states declined the invitation. Other countries (Armenia, Belarus) gratefully agreed to shelter under Russia's protective umbrella. Still other countries vacillated with their vacillating economic and political fortunes. When Ukraine was being courted more assiduously and less critically by a United States worried about its nuclear arsenal and its possible reintegration with Russia, it was charter of the CIS. The prospect of oil riches similarly made Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan more wary of the Russian bear's embrace. In the end, "empire lite" has come in some ways to resemble the European Union, with countries free to affiliate with those portions of the CIS agenda that best coincide with their national policies. The CIS has none of the heft of the European Union, however. Russia's initial aspiration that it would become a COMECON for its former republics has been reined in somewhat. Still, under the guise

of a voluntary union the Commonwealth allows the Russian Federation to keep its hand in the affairs of its former co-republics.

The Pendulum Swings Against the West

The Soviet Union's fear that it would lose the economic foot race with the West became, after its collapse, the certainty that it had suffered a serious setback. The code word for the malevolent force that had triumphed in that competition was "globalization." As is the case in many third-world countries, globalization was used by some in Russia to describe an IMF-World Bank cabal designed to turn Russia into a pauper and ensure Western, particularly American, hegemony. In the mouths of too few others, it meant only that the Soviet Union had failed to respond to the changing terms of international competition. For many, globalization nicely replaced imperialism as the bête noire. It reflected the new primacy of economics in the world order and it scratched the old scab of Russian insecurity.

Mounting Russian insecurity since the collapse of the Soviet Union finally coalesced into an anti-Western consensus with the U.S.-led NATO action over Kosovo. As Paul Kubicek puts it, "the fall of the Western position in Russian foreign policy and the emergence of more nationalist leaders played out against the backdrop of the Bosnian crisis."⁵² The disillusion had actually become manifest as early as 1993 as the cumulative result of declining living standards, reduced international prestige, and the criminalization of governance and economic life. It was the age-old tradition of panslavism, however, that crystallized Russian antipathy to the West. Kozyrev's acceptance of UN sanctions against the rump state of Yugoslavia sparked resistance in

the Russian parliament, the Duma.⁵³ That resistance only increased as NATO, following the February 1994 shelling of the Sarajevo marketplace, issued an ultimatum without consulting Russia. The “tradition” of not consulting Russia continued through the April 1994 Serb attacks on UN-declared safe houses in Gorazde and the resultant NATO air campaign, to the November 1995 Dayton accords.

Some observers have argued that this “assertive” Western approach reduced the Russian role in the Balkans, and have posited that it is the best way to handle a humbled Moscow. Paul Kubicek argues that “when the West adopts a unified policy that will brook no opposition (Bosnia, NATO expansion), Russia backs down from rhetorical threats and tries to save face by getting the best deal it can. . . .Notably, when Russian foreign policy undergoes this shift, there is no discernible change in domestic coalitions or even in public opinion. Nor does Western pressure automatically lead to a strengthening of anti-Western positions in Russia.”⁵⁴ While it is true that a united Western front pushed the Russians out of the Balkans, it should be remembered that it also caused a sea change in Russian domestic politics. Cold War veteran Yevgenij Primakov replaced the pro-Western Kozyrev as Foreign Minister and the Russians' anti-Western position hardened. A revived Communist Party of Russia routed other parties in the 1995 elections to the Duma. With little support in the parliament, President Yeltsin increasingly ruled by decree. As some characterized it: “After a brief hiatus under foreign ministers Shevardnadze and Kozyrev, the old nomenklatura regained influence

⁵² Paul Kubicek, "Russian Foreign Policy and the West," Political Science Quarterly (Winter 1999/2000), pp. 547-68.

⁵³ Kubicek, pp. 547-578.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 547-578.

over foreign policy-making.”⁵⁵ Under Primakov, the “imperative of offsetting U.S. hegemony became paramount. Countries such as France, China, and India” were courted in an effort to get them to join an anti-U.S. front.⁵⁶ These sea changes in the make-up and inclinations of the Russian government were accompanied by an increase in popular anti-Western sentiment.

Perceived and actual Western slights temporarily resolved Russia's quest for a stable identity. If the end of the Cold War had found Russia an enthusiastic would-be member of the Western camp, then Western " perfidy" in the form of unrealistically-inflated expectations and an attack on one of Russia's Achille's heels, panslavism, caused it to move violently in the opposite direction. The pattern: a tentative embrace of the West followed by disillusion and alienation, had occurred before. The impulse reflected Russia's unresolved dilemma of identity and latent feelings of inferiority toward the West, which an event as superficial as the throwing off of the Soviet yoke could not resolve.

Summary

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia embraced the West. In retrospect, that uncritical embrace can be viewed as just one swing of the pendulum in Russia's complicated relationship with the rest of the world. Feelings of inferiority and a belief among those in power that the demise of the Soviet state had freed Russia to assume its rightful place in the community of western nations were ultimately tempered by the realization in Russia that much of its presence in the western community's affairs

⁵⁵ Ingmar Oldbert, Helen Jarlsvik, Johan Norbert, Caroline Vendal, At A Loss: Russian Foreign Policy in the 1990s (Stockholm: Defence Research Establishment, 1999), pp. 182.

⁵⁶ Paula J. Dobriansky, “Russian Foreign Policy: Promise or Peril?” The Washington Quarterly (Winter 2000), p. 135.

would be symbolic. Following a period of mounting popular and elite resentment, the pendulum definitively swung back with NATO action in Kosovo. Largely responsible for the violence of the Russian response there was the tradition of panslavism, a belief that Russia had a special, fraternal relationship with the south Slavs and that there, at least, it should be primus inter pares. The result of Kosovo was a mini-restoration of the Soviet Union, with the installation of veteran Soviet apparatchiks, most notably Yevgenij Primakov, the more vigorous cultivation of "rogue" states, and a more reflexively anti-western foreign policy line.

At the same time, Russia struggled, largely ineffectually, to reassert some of the prerogatives of empire. It embraced the cause of Russian speakers in the former Soviet republics in an effort to win leverage over its former colonies. In its pursuit of a renewed toehold in the "near abroad," Russia's policies capitalized on the never well-defined distinction of what constituted a Russian. It was not surprising that most of those deemed worthy of the Russian state's concern were at one time the shock troops of imperial expansion: those who "russified" contiguous territory or colonized in the name of one or another grand social experiment. This definition was consistent with Russia's historical preference to see its constituents as empire-builders first, citizens second.

THE PUTIN ERA: THE RESTORATION?

Introduction

Although Russia under President Putin remains very much a work in progress, distinct trends can be discerned. They will be discussed in what follows through the prism of the salient characteristics of empire identified in the earlier sections of this paper: Russian national identity, contiguity, and Russia's relationship with the West.

Domestically, the Russian government has made attempts to re-centralize authority that was in danger of slipping from Moscow's grasp under Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Cautious and ultimately inadequate measures have been taken to reform the economy and combat corruption. Although Russia at this writing retains a free press and a fledgling civil society, both are under siege and the political pluralism that marked the early, post-Soviet years appears to be waning. In defiance of Western expectations in the immediate, post-Soviet years, Russia appears to be self-consciously charting its own path in domestic affairs, with every sign at this point that it will become an oligarchic democracy. Although elections will continue to be held, vast powers will repose in the executive branch, presidents will anoint their successors, and respect for human rights will be honored in the breach. Some major cities will see the emergence of a middle class, but Russian society as a rule will remain extremely stratified, with much of the country's money and political power in the hands of the few.

As was the case through much of late-Soviet history, and during the Yeltsin era, Russia's foreign policy for the foreseeable future will be held hostage to domestic economic realities. The need for economic "favors": WTO membership for example, and Russia's constrained financial circumstances will keep it reluctantly in the western

camp. As has been the case with Kosovo, NATO expansion, NMD, the ABM treaty, U.S. troops in Central Asia, and other issues, Moscow each time will reveal its true preferences before bending reluctantly to reality.

Moscow's relationship with the West will remain complicated. Often contradictory impulses will vie with one another in the Russian foreign policy calculus. Attempts to forge de-facto anti-western coalitions will continue to be made. Perceived economic necessity will prolong relations with states unfriendly to the West. Russia will bridle at, but ultimately accept, a vastly increased western presence in its traditional sphere of influence. The impulse to be part of the western concord will contend with feelings of inferiority and resentment at perceived slights to produce occasionally volatile behavior. Even now, Putin's decision to join the United States' campaign against terrorism appears to cut across popular sentiment in Russia.

The Russian leadership will attempt to make a virtue of necessity, by using alliance with the West to pursue its own ends --as it has used the war on terrorism to free its hands in Chechnya-- and by arguing the "maturity" of its approach to the Russian people. It will continue to probe for advantages and influence in its "near abroad," but these will be based less on nostalgia for empire than was the case in the immediate post-Soviet years. The alleged plight of the "Russian speakers" in the former republics will be used where appropriate to increase Moscow's leverage. It is difficult to say at this time if these latent reflexes will arrange themselves into something more worrying for the West. Since Russia retains many of the attributes of a great power, however, such an outcome should not be excluded.

Domestic Problems

When Vladimir Putin took office in March 2000, Russia faced daunting problems. An already-catastrophic Russian demographic crisis was further worsening, with a low birth rate, high infant mortality, and declining life expectancy causing the country's population to drop at the rate of 750,000 persons per year. At that pace, Russia's population would decline by one-third by 2050, from 145 to 100 million, and questions of its ability to retain physical control of Russia's vast territory would arise. (In a July 2001 speech, Putin identified Russia's demographic collapse as the most acute of sixteen grave problems facing the country. The decrepit health care system, he admitted, was not equal to the task of addressing the crisis, but he offered no concrete proposals for its renewal.)⁵⁷

Also on the domestic agenda were rising crime, corruption, and a decaying social and physical infrastructure, as well as an economy that, though growing, remained minuscule, with a GNP less than that of the Netherlands, average per capita income one-tenth of Estonia's, and per capita investment one-tenth of Hungary's.⁵⁸ Russia remained as well too dependent on the export of raw materials, oil and natural gas in particular. (It is estimated that a one dollar drop in the price of a barrel of oil on the world market costs the Russian budget 1.4 billion dollars over a full year.)⁵⁹ The August 1998 financial crisis had eviscerated a fledgling middle class and provoked much domestic cynicism and despair. With evasion of Russia's Byzantine tax code a national pastime, the federal government was capturing little revenue. Lack of confidence in the country's financial stability and future meant that much of the money earned was being cached in offshore

⁵⁷ Murray Feshbach, "Russia's Population Meltdown," The Wilson Quarterly (Winter 2001), pp. 15-21.

⁵⁸ Rajan Menon, "Structural Constraints on Russian Diplomacy," Orbis (Fall 2001), pp. 46-53.

⁵⁹ Robert Cottrell, "An Interview with President Putin," The Financial Times (12/17/01), p. 6.

bank accounts. The war in Chechnya droned on, with the Russian military demonstrating only its ability to inflict casualties on civilians and destroy real estate.

In setting a course for Russia, Putin seemed to embrace both Russia's Soviet and imperial pasts. He tipped his hat to the Soviet and Russian imperial traditions by re-establishing as state symbols the Russian imperial two-headed eagle and tricolor, and the Soviet anthem (although the words were different) and the Red Army military banner. And he was clever enough in his first year at the helm to invite guests to the Kremlin from across the political spectrum in an effort to consolidate Russian society behind him; from former KGB head and putsch participant Vladimir Kryuchkov to former dissident and prominent slavophile Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.⁶⁰

The Domestic Front: Halting Disintegration

In an effort to halt Russia's continued disintegration and restore a unitary state, Putin used the extraordinary powers vested in him by the 1993 constitution to create seven "super districts" in Russia with governors who reported directly to him. And he intensified the military campaign against Chechen separatism, pushing on in a way reminiscent of Russia in the 1860s and in the face of international criticism to bring Chechnya forcibly back into the Russian fold.

Although criticized abroad, this first post-Soviet colonial war enjoyed broad support at home. Its intention was to secure Russia's frontiers and to re-establish Russian control over one of its historically more restive territories.

Democracy As A Means

⁶⁰ Archie Brown, "Vladimir Putin and the Reaffirmation of Central State Power," Post-Soviet Affairs (January-March 2001), pp. 16-23.

With civil society less of a potent mobilizing force than it had been in the early post-Soviet era, but the Russian people clearly tired of the factionalism that had riven Russian society during Yeltsin's twilight years in power, conditions were ripe for Putin to pursue his own version of democracy. It appeared that, for Putin, democracy was a "means, not an end – an instrument to revive national power."⁶¹ Putin would use that power in the service, observers believed, of problem solving, not of ideology. Putin's willingness to use democracy as a tool recalled Nicholas II's belated resort to the Duma and Lenin's willingness to use limited democracy in furthering their ends. In both cases, what should have been ends were viewed as instruments for retaining and enhancing power.

Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin

On New Year's eve 2001, in the Russian leaders' traditional end-of-year remarks to the Russian public, President Putin proudly proclaimed that other countries, by which he presumably meant the West, had begun to "trust and respect" Russia. "They began to understand us better," he concluded.⁶² Putin's use of the word "respect" in his New Year's remarks directly addressed Russia's perennial feelings of inadequacy. When paired with "trust" and "understand," words unthinkable during the Soviet era, Putin seemed to be asserting that his foreign policy had brought Russia qualitatively new relations with the outside world.

What were the vectors of the foreign policy that Putin was referring to? It is after all in the realm of foreign policy that Russia's imperial legacy and straitened circumstances most clearly collide. In crafting a response to Russia's problem of national

⁶¹ Dale R. Herspring and Jacob Kipp, "Understanding the Elusive Mr. Putin," Problems of Post-

self-definition and in seeking its newly diminished place in the world, President Putin was clearly aware of the constraints under which he operated. Initially, the President and his foreign ministry settled on a strategy for the problems posed by globalization, an economic process in which, they were sure, Russia would be an ultimate loser. If the theology of globalization had it that the increasingly close economic cooperation of the international community would produce a more prosperous future for all, then surely no one could object to close cooperation by the international community in the search for solutions to the world's political problems? Russia under Putin began to promote this strategy, what Moscow called "multipolarity," with a stable of potential allies.

As the Russian Federation's "Conception of the Foreign Policy" had it, Russia would strive for the establishment of a multipolar system of international relations that would accurately reflect the diversity of the contemporary world and the variety of its interests.⁶³ A Russian observer of Moscow's behavior revealed at least one of the aims of "multipolarity." "Russia has no interest in seeing globalization degenerate into Americanization," she noted. "Russia has a vital interest in close cooperation with the U.S., but Moscow should combat U.S. hegemony."⁶⁴ Multipolarity would be used to blunt the influence wielded by the U.S. and its allies under the rubric of globalization.

Certainly, the "Conception" mentioned the "tendency towards the creation of an unipolar world structure under the economic and military dominance of the United States" as one of the challenges and threats facing the Russian Federation.⁶⁵ And it

⁶² Communism (September-October 2001), pp. 3-17.

⁶² "Obrashchenie Putina po sluchayu novovo goda," Vremya (1/1/02).

⁶³ See "Kontsepsiya vneshej politiki Rossijskoj federatsii" at Russian Security Council website: www.scrf.gov.ru

⁶⁴ Karen Brulents, "In Search of Pax Americana," Russian Social Sciences Review (May-June 2000), pp. 67-83.

⁶⁵ "Kontsepsiya..."

worried about the “globalization of the world economy” along with the strengthening of the role of international institutes and mechanisms in the world economy and political system.”⁶⁶

The fear of the United States was tangible as skepticism about its true intentions increased, both among the Russian elite and the general public following NATO’s 1999 air campaign against Serbia.⁶⁷ Suspicion of the United States further crystallized in the first months of the Bush administration. In seeking to assuage fears about a newly assertive United States and soothe Russia’s wounded pride, Putin seemed to be attempting to carve out for Russia the role of rhetorical elder statesman. As a country that had graduated from empire and from the superpower rivalry, the new foreign policy seemed to be saying, Russia now understood the importance of multilateral cooperation to solve the world’s problems. It valorized multilateral institutions like the UN and the OSCE while disparaging U.S. attempts to re-cast Cold War institutions like NATO in a new mold.⁶⁸

In his frequent television appearances and newspaper interviews, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov seemed best to reflect the Russian attitude. In a January 2001 Russian television appearance Ivanov, when questioned about a bumptious Bush administration, cautioned that the “first three months of every (new American) administration are difficult (for Russia).” It was essential, he added, “not to react to provocative announcements;” Russia must not “adopt the pose of someone ‘offended,’” Ivanov counseled, if the United States were to withdraw from the ABM treaty. Ivanov sought to

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ Vladimir Shlapentakh, “Russian Attitudes Toward America: A Split Between the Ruling Class and the Masses,” *World Affairs* (Summer 2001), pp. 17-25.

⁶⁸ “Kontseptsiya...”

put a similarly disinterested perspective on NATO expansion. Rather than dwell on the threat it posed to Russia, he noted only: “it would not be in the interest of European security.”⁶⁹

It was also Ivanov who made the most eloquent case for Russia’s association with the West. Russia had been part of the European “concert” since the defeat of Napoleon, he insisted. Ivanov rejected, however, a foreign policy that would pit East against West as “contradicting state interests.” This harmonized well with Russia’s historical conviction that it was both a European and an Asian power.⁷⁰

The elevated tone adopted by Ivanov contrasted with the more down-to-earth spin given the new state of relations by Putin. Observers had long pegged Putin as an “advocate of realpolitik.⁷¹ In his April 2001 address to the Russian parliament, the Duma, Putin asserted that Russia “must build its foreign policy on the basis of a clear definition of its national priorities, pragmatism, and economic efficiency.”⁷² In pursuing that triad, imperial ambitions must give way to national aspirations. The latter he seemed prepared to defend as he saw them; witness his willingness to withstand international criticism in prosecuting the war in Chechnya, his scant regard for the niceties of law in attempting to rein in some of the “oligarchs,” his treatment of the media, and his administrative efforts to combat Russia’s centrifugal tendencies. Putin’s pragmatism extended as well to protection of Russia’s access to important markets, a key to an improved economy. Notwithstanding pressure by the United States, Russia continued to

⁶⁹ Interview with RF Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov on TVTs program “Postskriptum” with A.S. Pushkov, (January 22, 2001).

⁷⁰ Igor Ivanov, “The New Russian Identity, Innovation and Continuity in Russian Foreign Policy,” The Washington Quarterly (Summer 2001), pp. 7-13.

⁷¹ Herspring and Kipp, pp. 3-17.

⁷² Richard V. Daniels, “The Bush-Putin Pas de Deux,” The New Leader (9-10/2001), pp. 3-6.

pursue arms deals with "rogue" states. As the second-largest purveyor of weapons on the world market (\$7.7 billion in 2000), the arms industry was critical to Russia's economy and underlay many "declarations of strategic partnership" signed by Moscow and other countries.⁷³ The October 2000 "Declaration of Strategic Partnership" with India for example was keyed on the sale of T-90 tanks and an aircraft-carrying cruiser. Similarly, the "Friendship and Cooperation Treaty" signed with China in July 2001 under girded annual arms sells to Beijing estimated to exceed \$2 billion per year and expected to total \$20 billion between 2000-2004. "Axis of evil" states like Iran were also regular customers. Teheran purchased an estimated \$800 million of weapons from Moscow from 1997-2000.⁷⁴

Putin's ability to distinguish imperial nostalgia from legitimate national aspirations was best evinced by his resolve, often in the face of considerable "national-patriotic" resistance, to part with some of the trappings of empire and alienate traditional allies in doing so. The decisions to terminate leases on a listening post in Cuba and the deep-water port at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, while variously portrayed by some in the Russia media as a retreat from engagement abroad or a "present" to President Bush on the eve of the Shanghai Summit, in fact saved Russia about \$500 million in lease payments per year.⁷⁵ With the listening post at Lourdes, Cuba, widely thought to be technologically outdated and no sailing Pacific fleet to make port calls at Cam Ranh Bay, the decisions made eminent good sense and demonstrated the Russian President's pragmatism.

⁷³ Menon, pp. 17-28.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ "Kubi nyet - Yanki da," Novoe Vremya (10/28/2001), pp. 8-10.

Although Putin remained extraordinarily popular, decisions to reduce Russia's reach overseas, downsize the military, and most importantly maintain cordial relations with the United States in spite of Washington's evident determination to act unilaterally in what were once key areas of mutual concern, rankled important constituencies in Russia. The domestic media reported that Putin had overruled "his military" in closing the Lourdes listening post.⁷⁶ Well-informed Russian defense correspondent Pavel Felgenhauer alleged in an end-of-year article "ten years after the demise of the USSR Russian generals still see NATO and the U.S. as their main potential enemy." Although the world has profoundly changed in the last ten years, Felgenhauer continued, "for the Russian military it is more or less the same."⁷⁷ There were separate, anecdotal reports that Felgenhauer's pessimism about the military's capacity for change was well founded. On December 17, 2001, the Strategic Rocket Forces allegedly celebrated their forty-second anniversary by toasting the health of President Bush, whose announced intention to withdraw from the ABM Treaty "made America's aggressive intentions obvious."⁷⁸ Putin's muted reaction to the Bush Administration's decision could hardly have endeared him to the Russian military's cold warriors.

This new tone in the "Framework" foreign policy pronouncements attempted to thread the needle of the various alternatives available to Russia. In it was recapitulated Russia's ambivalent attitude toward the West. With one foot in the Western camp, Russia describes itself as both an Asian and a European power while at the same time attempting to reconstitute the parity of the former bilateral world through multilateralism. Coupled

⁷⁶ "Shankhaj na puti k Krofordu," Novoe Vremya (10/28/01), pp. 26-28.

⁷⁷ Pavel Felgenhauer, "The Ghost of Christmas Past," The Moscow Times (12/28/01).

⁷⁸ Ibid

with this was a new pragmatism that permitted Russia to dispose of its former superpower trappings in the pursuit of economic regeneration. It is significant how much of the "Framework" document keys on Russia's relation with the West, and the ways in which it encapsulates the ambivalent feelings that have historically characterized its relations with its western neighbors. These feelings of identity, inferiority, and rivalry as we have seen in previous sections of this paper have characterized Russia's complicated relations with the West almost from its inception as Empire.

The Russia-speakers also continued to play an important role in Russia's foreign policy calculus. In the "Framework" document, their protection is identified as one of Russia's foreign policy priorities and the Putin Administration has lobbied as hard as its predecessors, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to see that their rights are protected.

The Russian Intelligentsia

If the Russian military was skeptical of Putin's perceived docility in the face of the United States' unilateral actions, much of the Russia intelligentsia and public seemed satisfied. Putin's popularity rating hovered at about 73 percent. And, speaking for the intelligentsia, émigré writer Vasilij Aksyonov, in an end-of-year article in a Moscow newspaper, was unstinting in his praise of Putin. The President, Aksyonov wrote, "understood that for Russia a non-committal position would mean simple stagnation. . .only constant and irreversible Westernization will help Russia assume its respectable historical place (in the world)." ⁷⁹(Foreign Minister Ivanov indicated after the Aksyonov article had been published that Russia's bipolar policy would continue, however: "both vectors are important to our national interests," he insisted.) Aksyonov rejected the anti-

⁷⁹ Vasilij Aksyonov, "Na zapad bez maski," Moskovskie Novosti (1/31/01).

Western tendencies of “some of Russia’s highbrows,” and asserted that he would not be surprised if in the not-too-distant future Russia were to join NATO.⁸⁰

Aksyonov was seconded by Russian foreign policy maven Sergei Karaganov who began an article reviewing the year’s foreign policy achievements by announcing that “2001 was the second successful year in a row for Russian foreign policy.” Karaganov ascribed close relations with the United States to the “restraint of the Russian leadership.” Thanks to that restraint, he added, Russia had been transformed from a “half-adversary/partner into a privileged partner of Washington.” Unlike Aksyonov, however, Karaganov did not recommend uncritical Westernization. The “practical Americans,” he worried, “once again want to lock us into a position that would be advantageous for them, not so advantageous for us.” Karaganov suggested that Russia strengthen its relations with Europe but not, he hastened to add, in accord with the Soviet practice of attempting to drive a wedge between Europe and the U.S., but in order to bring Russia closer to the West.⁸¹

Making a Virtue of Necessity?

The resourcefulness displayed by Russia in pursuing its foreign policy goals in reduced circumstances could not mask its precipitous decline on the international stage. Both Russian and Western commentators were pessimistic about Moscow's options and skeptical of Putin's alleged successes. Sergei Rogov of the Institute of U.S.A. and Canada suggested that the “dialogue between the West and Russia has. . .been reduced to official meetings in which Russia is invited to agree with decisions made by other

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Sergei Karaganov, “Evropa ne dolzhna nas revnovat’,” Moskovskie Novosti (January 31, 2001).

governments." At best, Rogov thought, Moscow "plays the role of a bogeyman or potential threat, helping the U.S. maintain its leadership in the West."⁸²

Many Western observers have seconded Rogov's pessimistic assessment. Paula Dobriansky, who now occupies a prominent position in the U.S. Department of State, wrote at the end of 2000 that the number of foreign policy options for Russia could be increased only by a "modicum of political and economic progress."⁸³ And that, she thought, was unlikely over the near term. Fiona Hall of the Brookings Institute asserted that for the foreseeable future "the U.S. will be dealing with a continuously weakened Russia."⁸⁴ Current National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice worried in 2000 that Russia's "economic weakness and problems of national identity threaten to overwhelm it." Always the Cold Warrior, she concluded "America is threatened not by Russia's strength, but by its weakness and incoherence."⁸⁵ William Odom, in his obituary for Russia, exulted that "Russia has become a 'normal' country – a member of that large majority of states in the world that are weak, poor, and ambling along their own paths headed nowhere in particular. . ."⁸⁶

Other Western commentators refused to succumb to the urge to consign Russia to the dustbin of history. Robert Zoellick, like Rice a member of the current administration, more cautiously described Russia as "a work in progress. . ."⁸⁷ Director of the Moscow-

⁸² Sergei Rogov, "Russia and the U.S. at the Threshold of the 21st Century," The Russian Social Science Review (May-June 2000), pp. 34-49.

⁸³ Dobriansky, p. 135.

⁸⁴ Fiona Hall, "Russian Foreign Policy," The Brookings Institute (Fall 2000), p. 12.

⁸⁵ Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," Foreign Affairs (January-February 2000), pp. 45-62.

⁸⁶ William E. Odom, "Realism About Russia," The National Interest (Fall 2001), pp. 56-66.

⁸⁷ Robert B. Zoellick, "A Repulican Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs (Fall 2000), pp. 63-78.

based Carnegie Center, Dmitrij Trenin, warned of Russia's continued capacity for mischief. "Being seen as a problem is easier for Russia than being seen as irrelevant or marginal," he believed.⁸⁸ Although no longer a superpower, Russia retained the ability to derail the agendas of others.

Taking a yet longer and more benign view, Russian scholar Michael McFaul, has argued from the opposite end of the spectrum that "over the long term, Russia's size, natural resources, educated population, and strategic location in Europe and Asia will ensure that it will emerge again as a power in the international system."⁸⁹

Although some characterize Russia as "Zaire with permafrost"⁹⁰ and even though most balanced observers concede that the "intense and multi-dimensional"⁹¹ Cold War rivalry is a thing of the past, still others warn that the habits of empire should not be underestimated in calculating Russia's future. Bismarck famously declared "Russia is never as strong or weak as it appears."⁹² More recently, Henry Kissinger has cautioned that "of course history does not always repeat itself, but expansion extending over four centuries does reflect a certain proclivity."⁹³ Certainly, the current Russian leadership is acutely conscious of its imperial inheritance, just as it is aware of Russia's straitened circumstances. The opening sentence of the Russian Federation's most recent foreign policy framework document prefers, however, to concentrate on the imperial tradition:

⁸⁸ Dmitrij Trenin, "Less is More," The Washington Quarterly (Summer 2001), pp. 135-144.

⁸⁹ Nation and McFaul, p. 61.

⁹⁰ Odom, pp. 56-66.

⁹¹ Nation, p. 13.

⁹² Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-96 (New York: MacMillan, 1996), p. 348.

⁹³ Henry Kissinger, "Russia: The Habit of Empire," The Washington Post (August 13, 1991).

"The Russian Federation, a great power and one of the influential centers of the world. . .," it begins.⁹⁴

Although such a grandiose opening sounds faintly comical to some ears, it is nevertheless true that a reduced Russia retains many of the attributes of empire.⁹⁵ It preserves 80 percent of the territory of the USSR, it remains the second-ranking nuclear power, it has the world's largest repository of strategic resources, it retains considerable military capacity, and it is one of the world's centers of civilization.⁹⁶ It is also a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The essence of the current Russian foreign policy predicament nevertheless is the clash between its reduced capabilities and its image of itself.⁹⁷ Russia has emerged from the Soviet experience as "not really a nation. It is a bleeding hulk of empire, what happened to be left over when other republics broke away."⁹⁸ The sense of purpose, once imparted by Soviet ideology, has not yet been replaced.⁹⁹ But some movement has occurred, although not perhaps the kind the West hoped for when the Soviet Union disintegrated. Stability and control have replaced modernization and democratization as Russia's foreign and domestic policy imperatives.¹⁰⁰ In other words, the Western agenda for Russia has given way to one more congruent with Russian tradition

Russia Returns to its Roots

⁹⁴ See "Kontseptiya" at RF NSC website.

⁹⁵ Robert Legvold, "Russia's Uninformed Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs (September/October 2001), p. 62.

⁹⁶ Nation, p. 26.

⁹⁷ Carnegie Corporation's Russian Initiative at www.carnegie.org/sub/program/russia.html

⁹⁸ Hosking, p. 484.

⁹⁹ Nation, p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, p. 2.

It is not surprising that Russia reverted to its former habits. Democratization and modernization were advocated only half-heartedly by Russia's Western mentors and the results were easy to predict. The American academic Stephen Cohen terms the post-1991 U.S. aid program to Russia "the worst foreign policy disaster since Vietnam."¹⁰¹ Instead of the hoped-for modernization, a profound de-modernization occurred. Barter replaced money; almost 75 percent of the impoverished population was forced to grow its own food; typhus, typhoid, and cholera became widespread; and chronic malnutrition increased.¹⁰² Even mainstream Russians began to suspect that there was a Western conspiracy to reduce their country to a mere supplier of raw materials.¹⁰³ Particularly galling to Russians were unrealistically high Western expectations. By expecting Russia to experience few setbacks on its journey to Western civilization, the West virtually guaranteed that its attitude toward Russia would oscillate between euphoria at its successes and despair and its frequent, but perhaps unavoidable, failures.¹⁰⁴

As a result, after nine years of Western tutelage, two-thirds of Russians believed that their country should follow its own path. Only 17 percent agreed that the West had had a beneficial effect on Russia and 66 percent of Russians were convinced that the West was conspiring to destroy Russia.

Some observers attributed Russia's failure to "get it" to "path dependence," i.e., the difficulty of modifying already-functioning institutions, however imperfect they may be.¹⁰⁵ Michael McFaul offers an optimistic apologia for Russia when he writes,

¹⁰¹ Cohen, p. 9.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 41.

¹⁰³ Blank, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ Menon, p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ Odom, pp. 56-66.

"countries do not become democratic overnight. More typically, they pass through a rocky transitional period where democratic control over foreign policy is partial, where mass politics mixes in volatile ways with authoritarian elite politics, and where democratization suffers reversals."¹⁰⁶ But it is as likely that Russia's reversion to the habits of imperial governance, even if the empire is no more, is not a stage in a ragged transition to democracy but part of an evolving popular consensus about the nature of the Russian state. With the imperfect rudiments of representative democracy in place: minimally free and fair elections, a functioning legislature, and, although it is disappearing fast, a free press, Russia and Russians seemed to have joined consensus on next steps.¹⁰⁷ Although greatly diminished in size, Russia still shoulders "the largest security burden in the world. It has the largest territory, no natural barriers, a small population, and volatile neighbors."¹⁰⁸ The Russian proclivity to agonize over and perhaps magnify those already significant security threats persists. (The Deputy Chairman of the Duma's Committee for International Affairs, in one example, sees an anti-Russian axis in an incipient alliance of NATO (Turkey), Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.)¹⁰⁹

Exacerbating that long-established tendency is the behavior of Russia's rivals, in particular the United States. As Adam Garfinkle wrote already in 1999: "the United States sees itself not as a key pillar in an evolving post-Cold War multi-polar system but

¹⁰⁶ McFaul in International Security, pp. 5-31.

¹⁰⁷ President Putin's consistently high popularity ratings are evidence of that consensus.

¹⁰⁸ Carnegie Corporation's Russian Initiative, see website.

¹⁰⁹ Aleksei Podberezkin, "National Security," The Russian Social Science Review (March-April 2000), pp. 76-95.

as a unitary power strong enough to transcend any balance."¹¹⁰ U.S. unilateralism fuels Russia's insecurities.

Although the reflexes of a familiar social order, be it Russian or Soviet, are in evidence, the analogy with Russia's previous regimes cannot be taken too far, at least at this point. For the time being, Russia is attempting to reconstitute its shattered economy. Imperial reconstruction remains a long-term, if largely unspoken aspiration, however.¹¹¹ Further CIS integration remains a priority and Ivanov reported, truthfully, at the end of 2001 that "integrative processes are gathering force." And with each successive year the sting of lost empire fades, allowing the Russian leadership to more dispassionately and successfully pursue its goals

Wellsprings and Russian Foreign Policy Behavior

What do Russia's imperial legacy, current reduced circumstances, retreat from democracy, and complicated relationship with the West mean for U.S. foreign policy in the near to medium term? The long-term consequences of actions that touch on the wellsprings of Russian behavior should be considered carefully. One can categorize these potential actions as spatial, civilizational, and identity-based. Spatial foreign policy actions are those that impinge on territory traditionally considered to be within Russia's sphere of interest. Although, given Russia's current relative powerlessness, it is entirely possible that "intrusions" into Russia's "sphere of influence" may even occur with the reluctant assent of the Russian government, as has been the case with the current, temporary basing of U.S. troops in Central Asia and the training of Georgian troops in the

¹¹⁰ Adam Garfinkle, "NSC-68 Redux," SAIS Review (Winter/Spring 1999), p. 146.

¹¹¹ Nation, p. 24.

Pankisi Gorge, they are certain to provoke resentment at the grassroots and among traditionally more conservative constituencies among the Russian elites. While the Russian leadership is not as sensitive or responsive to grassroots sentiments as the government of the United States, the impact of these actions cannot ultimately be ignored by the Russian executive. To do so risks a gradual erosion of credibility. Because the levers of power in Russia are not as directly driven by public opinion as they are in the United States, the results of these actions are generally felt cumulatively and over time.

In order to prevent an erosion of credibility, the Russian government generally attempts to portray concessions it must make in one wellspring area as a "trade-off" that reaps it concrete benefits in another area. For example, the basing of U.S. troops in Central Asia is generally portrayed as the price that must be paid for U.S. and Western cooperation in the civilizational wellspring: winning admission to Western institutions or being seen as the coequal of Russia's western peers, or freeing Russia's hands to pursue terrorists in Chechnya. Again, if these trade-offs are not successful the cumulative effects can be significant. One can argue that the Kozyrev foreign policy team, in its wholesale rush to westernization, was perceived to have made too many such unsuccessful trades. The consequence was a sweeping, if temporary, reversal of Russia's foreign policy tangent.

Actions that cut across two or more of the traditional wellsprings are especially fraught for the Russian leadership. For example, the plight of Russian speakers in the Baltic republics touches on at least two of Russia's traditional wellsprings: identity and space, and possibly civilization as well. Cutting as it does to the heart of all identity issues for the Russian empire, perceived attempts to undercut the rights of Russian

speakers in the Baltic states have provoked a particularly violent, and to western audiences initially excessive reaction by the Russian government. The Russian government's reaction, however, was broadly and emotionally supported by the Russian public. On these issues there can be little talk of trade-offs or compromise by the Russian government, as they are seen as non-negotiable. That the issue of the rights of Russian speakers also resonates with Russia's imperial role only adds to the power of its appeal.

In Russian domestic debates, the participants generally align themselves in support of one or another of the traditional wellsprings as they affect the issue under discussion. The participants in the debate on these litmus test issues, then, implicitly argues that for a given issue one of the wellsprings should be given precedence over others. The nineteenth-century Slavophile-Westernizer debates or their contemporary incarnations can be in this way understood as arguments over the relative merits of identity and civilization with the Slavophiles valorizing the former, the Westernizers the latter.

Unifying these three wellsprings is the necessarily amorphous notion of Russia's "uniqueness." As noted at points earlier in this paper, this (Russian) conviction has been variously expressed in religious, ethnic, civilizational, and other terms, e.g., "Moscow as the Third Rome," Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia and the special mission that implies, or Russia as one of the world's civilizational centers. Any western foreign policy action which does not consider this vague, but for Russians self-evident truth runs the risk of encountering stiff resistance. Such was the case with U.S.-led NATO action in Kosovo which initially at least ran roughshod over Russia's belief that it should be primus inter pares in the region and was accordingly resisted.

For the foreseeable future, it appears that Russia will be unable to make its dissatisfaction with U.S. or Western foreign policy initiatives meaningfully felt. This does not mean, however, that Russia's interests should be ignored, especially if more lasting regional arrangements are contemplated. Russia possesses all the prerequisites of a great power and it is likely that its influence will again be felt in the international arena.

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